

YUGO-423

RECORD OF CONVERSATION
MAJOR GENERAL LOWELL W. BOOKS - ROBERT BURNUP
5:35 p.m. - 25 OCTOBER 1946.

Regg
To Central Registry
Books
9 June 48

Yugoslavia - 403 - Arrest - Robert Burnup

Mr. Burnup stated that, as he was going to Ljubljana in connection with his UNRRA duties, he was asked by the Director of Administrative Services in Belgrade to go on to Trieste and assist in moving five jeeps into Yugoslavia from that place. While in Trieste the first of the two American airplanes was shot down. The next day Mr. Burnup returned to Ljubljana. He was very much interested in the matter of the American airplane and approached the site and asked permission to photograph it. He was told that this would be impossible without permission of the Air Officer in charge to whom he was directed. Mr. Burnup presented himself to the Air Officer in charge and requested permission to photograph the plane. Permission was refused. In the course of this incident Mr. Burnup gave his name. He thinks beyond question that this incident served later to direct suspicion upon him. While still in Ljubljana the second airplane was shot down and Mr. Burnup again was very interested in this matter. He visited the general area where the airplane had fallen but this time made no formal request and does not know whether in fact the Yugoslave authorities were aware of this incident.

annexed to file 8 Aug 48 left Aug 10

was required to produce his dog tags which were copied

Mr. Burnup then left Ljubljana and while enroute to Belgrade suffered an automobile accident, which gave him a severe concussion of the brain and injured his right arm. Under medical advice he worked for a time on only one-half day basis. This gave him considerable leisure time and as he had always intended to read up on Yugoslavia as to its geography and economy, he went to the library and took out a book written by the British Intelligence in 1943, an excellent work on the subject. He also took to his quarters during this time a map of Yugoslavia which he had had at his office, this to facilitate his studies.

Aug 26

spent 3 weeks in bed and afterwards

Public Information Dept.

About this time Mr. Burnup decided he would like to go fishing. With an interpreter he went to the Ministry of the Interior and asked for permission. He was given a letter to the game warden in Bled. During this interview, the official with whom he talked in the Ministry of the Interior, or his interpreter, Mr. Burnup is not sure which, drew a sketch giving directions as to how to find the game warden in Bled. Mr. Burnup did make the fishing trip and after visiting the game warden in Bled and receiving the necessary authority, threw the sketch, which he had received in the Ministry of the Interior, away.

The last Saturday in July

not

/During

X - Yugoslavia - 406 - (Accident) Burnup
X - 403 - (Arrest)

During the time while he was partially incapacitated, and after returning from his ~~fishing trip~~ ^{Belgrade}, Mr. Burnup received a letter through the Army Post Office. It had been mailed in Trieste and in addition to a communication for himself, enclosed a letter addressed to what the writer said was his sister. The writer was entirely unknown to Mr. Burnup. The writer of the letter requested Mr. Burnup to deliver this to a friend of his sister with whom he had been unable to gain contact, at one of two addresses, both of which were given. Mr. Burnup went to one of the addresses and did not find the addressee but on going to the second met a woman who said she was in fact the writer's sister. Mr. Burnup accordingly left the letter in her possession. This was on a Tuesday.

On the following Friday on arriving home about 1:00 a.m. Mr. Burnup was taken into arrest by five Yugoslave police. He was lodged in a jail in the political prison in Belgrade. He was brought up for questioning shortly after his incarceration but was merely asked if he knew why he was under arrest. Mr. Burnup states that he replied that he did not although he admits now that he strongly suspected that it was on account of the letter. He states that he replied in the negative because of his fear that he would compromise the writer's sister unnecessarily. Mr. Burnup stated further that it is common occurrence in Trieste to meet up with people who profess anxiety to get in touch with their relatives and cannot do so through regular channels. Mr. Burnup states that it is quite common that travelers going into Belgrade agree to carry such mail. During the days that followed Mr. Burnup was asked if he had ever made any topographical sketches. He was questioned sharply on this. At first, he stated that he probably had at some time or other in connection with his journeyings around Yugoslavia, but could not remember specific incidents. This was unsatisfactory and he was required to state quite definitely that he had made sketches. Mr. Burnup stated that he feels now that the sketch of the Bled area, which was a strategic area, and which he had thrown away, had been found and served to cast suspicion on him.

After a good many days of continual questioning he was ^{taken} ~~removed from~~ the prison and taken to the Ministry of the Interior. He was given an opportunity to shave and ~~shave~~ ^{shave} up, the first in five days. He had had no soap, bed, toilet articles or other amenities while in prison. At the Ministry of the Interior ^{three} ~~two~~ members of UNRRA were permitted to talk to him. During the whole of his imprisonment the line of questioning had been such as to implicate him in a spy ring. Mr. Burnup stated categorically throughout his interrogation and maintains now that he was entirely innocent of any espionage in Yugoslavia. Specifically he denied that he was a member of the O.S.S.

Which he answered in the negative

The next question was if he had made any sketches of Bled.

for the purpose of interviewing 3 UNRRA officials

All of his activities which cast suspicion upon him were the result of his natural curiosity and of his innocent desire to help an anxious brother. He admits, however, that his action in delivering a letter from an unknown writer to an unknown addressee in Yugoslavia not only laid him open to suspicion of espionage, but might even, in fact, make him the instrument of an espionage service. In this respect Mr. Burnup feels that the Yugoslav Officials were justified in being suspicious of him, particularly if, as the Yugoslav Government later informed the Chief of the UNRRA Yugoslavia Mission, the letter contained specific inquiries as to troop locations, strength, composition and dispositions.

Mr. Burnup stated that, during his interrogation by the Yugoslav police, he was questioned closely on another matter. It appeared that the police had information that when he (Burnup) called at the second address to deliver the letter, he had asked the supposed sister to match a photograph of the purported brother, which he had in his possession. Mr. Burnup insisted and still insists that there was no truth to this report. Such an action would of course have been prima facie evidence of his connection with an espionage agency. Mr. Burnup further states that upon being confronted by the purported sister, who was alleged to have made the report, she retracted her story completely.

In the morning *returned to prison from*
Shortly after being ~~taken~~ to the Ministry of the Interior Mr. Burnup was informed that he was to be released. He was pressed to sign a statement that all of his personal effects had been returned to him. This he agreed to do only in respect of the articles he took with him upon his arrest; he would only certify as to those effects in his quarters after he had had a chance to check them. Mr. Burnup was also pressed to sign a statement that his treatment while a prisoner had been good. Despite pressure in this matter Mr. Burnup insisted on stating the facts which were that he had not suffered personal injuries or indignities but that his food and accommodations had been poor: No bed, mattress or amenities and only a part of a blanket in the way of bed clothes.

Mr. Burnup stated that he was amazed at his release as he had given up all hope of ever leaving the prison alive.

Mr. Burnup stated that he desired to return to his home and take up his regular occupation at the earliest possible time. He said, however, that after reporting to the Director General in person he would welcome the opportunity to confer with officials of the U. S. State Department and the Central Intelligence Division as he wanted very much the opportunity to clear himself of any suspicion that might exist in those organizations.

/Mr.

Mr. Burnup stated that aside from the affects of his automobile accident, from which he still suffered to some extent, his general health was excellent. He did want to be x-rayed, head and arm, to determine the extent of any injuries in his accident.

During the course of the interview Mr. Burnup seemed quite normal, frank and open. He readily agreed that his action in delivering the letter was a hazardous and unwise thing to have done.

Rooks
Lowell W. Rooks
Deputy Director General
Chief Executive Officer